

A PERFIN NON-COVER

by George A. Fisher, Jr.

The Perfin Club's new letterhead proclaims the club to be "An organization of philatelists devoted to the collection and study of Perforated Initials and Insignia in postage stamps." Among other things, my dictionary says that emblems are insignia. Those of you who collect Japanese Perfins know that there are many emblems among the several hundred Perfin designs. Sections W and X of ADACHI Sunao's catalog of Japanese Perfins illustrate nearly 100 emblematic designs, and many others are scattered through the earlier sections of the catalog.

Section Y is the last section in Adachi's catalog, and it contains but a single Perfin design. The title of Section Y translates "Perforation Cancellation" (Senkō Keshi-in). The design appears to be an arrangement of four triangles -- which it actually is, but really isn't. Those in the know could even read the design, pronouncing it "Tai Te."

"Tai Te" are, in effect, Japanese initials for "Taiwan Stokufu Teishin Kyoku," which means "Taiwan Government-General Communications Bureau." The bureau is the outfit that ran postal, telegraphic, telephone, radio, postal-savings, and money-order affairs for the Japanese Government in Taiwan (formerly called Formosa), the large island wrested from China in 1895 in the first Sino-Japanese War. The perforation design was the symbol or emblem of the bureau. It is made up of a stylized syllabic character "te" () superimposed upon a stylized ideographic character "tai" (), stylized to ().

"Tai," of course, is the first character of the two-character name "Taiwan." "Te" is the first syllable of the four-syllable (four Japanese syllables, that is) word "Teishin" (te-i-shi-n), meaning "communications," which can also be written with two ideographic characters, "tei" and "shin." The stylized "te" symbol () is universally recognized in Japan; on maps it represents the location of post offices.

So far as is known today, this Perfin was used for less than a year, beginning in 1923, to cancel stamps affixed to postal-savings forms for deposit in Taiwan. Sketcy reports in the Japanese philatelic press before World War II indicated that Furei (a regulation) No. 163 of 1922 permitted the use of any even-denomination postage stamps ("even" in the sense of excluding 1-sen and 1½-sen stamps) in postal-savings folders. Before this regulation, only certain specified denominations could be used. New postal-savings folders were printed to accommodate the new regulation. Unused postage stamps were affixed in prescribed spaces in the folder; when full, the amount was deposited in a postal-savings account. The stamps in the folder were cancelled, and the folder was handed back to the depositor for whatever use he cared to make of it (souvenir, stamp collection, whatever).

The accompanying illustration shows one of the newly printed forms. Pages 2 and 3 are printed on the back of pages 1 and 4,

and the form is folded vertically down the middle. It opens Japanese fashion: what we consider the back of a folder or book the Japanese consider (or did, before the post World War II reforms) the front. The array of stamps seems to indicate that the form was philatelically prepared, although the preparer got credit for a deposit--the stamps on page 3, all from the 1914-19 regular issue of Japan, add up to 17 yen 64 sen, as noted at the top of the page. The two commemorative stamps affixed to page 2 were not counted toward the deposit.



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The commemoratives were issued to mark the visit of the crown prince (who is now Emperor Hirohito) to Taiwan from 16 to 27 April 1923. Both are cancelled with the light-green commemorative postmark used to mark the occasion, the upper 1½-sen stamp on the first day of the visit, and the lower 3-sen stamp on the last day. (The light-green is barely discernible on the Xerox.) More evidence of the philatelic and/or souvenir aspect of this particular folder.

The circular datestamp in the lower-right corner of page 1 is the normal postal-savings type cancellation used in Taiwan in 1923, and was usually used to cancel stamps in the folders. The perforated cancellation was reportedly provided only upon request as a substitute for the messier inked cancellation, so that the stamps would "still look pretty." The perforated cancellation, of course, went completely through both the stamps and the form to which they were attached -- the perforated design shows especially well on page 4. Although the crown prince completed his visit on 27 April, depositor YAMAMOTO Yoshio (the name in the lower-left corner of page 1) didn't get around to making this deposit until 30 April 1923, the date in the CDS (perhaps a weekend intervened, but I don't know if post offices in Taiwan were or weren't open on weekends back then. The name of the post office in the CDS is Taihoku Onarichō, a branch office in the island's capital of Taihoku (called Taipei in Chinese).

The early Japanese reference to this Perfin, mentioned above, and Adachi, on page 92 of his Perfin catalog, both state that this Perfin came into use in the fall of 1923. This is obviously based on a lack of material for study, since my one item (this folder) pertaining to the Perfin is dated in the spring of 1923. The small legend at the bottom of page 3 says that the folder was printed in January 1923. I suspect that this was a newly designed form to replace older forms that specified certain denominations of stamps that could be used.

Use of this Perfin as an official cancellation ranks it among only three known official Perfins of the Japanese Government. The other two are the anchor used (in many variations) by the Japanese navy, and the double "M" used by the Japanese army.

I have had this form in my collection for about 20 years. Since acquiring it, I have never come across another copy of the "Tai Te" Perfin. I would be interested in hearing from members who have copies with a view toward trying to determine if this is really a common Perfin, as Adachi estimates, or if it is somewhat uncommon.